

Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, February 17, 2022

Testimony In Support of HB-5033, An Act Concerning Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education

Thank you, Representative Michel and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. My name is Jason Jakubowski, and I am the President & CEO of Connecticut Foodshare, the statewide food bank serving all of Connecticut. I am submitting testimony in support of HB-5033, An Act Concerning Food-Insecure Students at Public Institutions of Higher Education.

One out of every eight people in Connecticut is food insecure. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we witnessed the need increase to one out of every seven people. At Connecticut Foodshare, we see the impact of this extensive need every day, including in our work serving several food pantries operating on college campuses across the state. Connecticut Foodshare helps these college food pantries stock their shelves for students who are struggling to make ends meet as they work to achieve their degrees. We also see college students seeking help through our mobile pantry-on-wheels programs and SNAP Outreach Program.

For many low-income students, college is a path to breaking the cycle of poverty. Yet too many of these students are struggling to afford their basic needs – including adequate food – as they balance the expenses of housing, transportation, textbooks, and more. Studies have shown that food insecurity is associated with poorer health and can undermine educational performance.ⁱ These challenges are compounded by the stigma and shame that comes with asking for help, and limited access to federal food assistance programs such as SNAP because of program eligibility restrictions.ⁱⁱ

Consider first-generation college students who are trying their best to set a new path for their families or single-parents who are balancing work, childcare, and their studies – students who persist through the academic rigor of college, all while dealing with the underlying burden of food insecurity. With food insecurity projected to increase by 28% in Connecticut due to the pandemic, we know that the presence of hunger on college campuses will only increase and further complicate this issue.

It's time for us to get smart about college hunger. I encourage you to please support HB-5033 as a first step in ensuring that students in need receive appropriate aid. Connecticut Foodshare is committed to ending hunger on college campuses in the communities we serve. We stand ready to partner with the members of this committee and higher education institutions across the state to reach a day where every college student has access to the food they need to succeed. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Jason Jakubowski, President & CEO

jjakubowski@ctfoodshare.org

ⁱ <https://www.urban.org/research/publication/assessing-food-insecurity-campus>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-19-95>